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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4146  
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RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY  
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RHMFIUU/USFJ PRIORITY  
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 7728  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 1407  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3270  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2294  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9286  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 9753  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS TOKYO 001281

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - BURMA AND BUSH TRIP TO  
MIDDLE EAST

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Top items on Monday morning included a UN estimate that over 220,000 people are still missing in Burma more than a week after Cyclone Nargis devastated the country's coastal regions.

¶2. "Junta Goes Ahead with Referendum" The conservative Sankei reported from Bangkok (5/11): "The Burmese junta delayed relief work to carry out a referendum on a constitutional draft, because approval of the draft, which calls for 'democratization,' was deemed imperative to maintaining its grip on power. However, as soldiers in the field raised doubts about the vote and as deeply religious Burmese believe that the devastation wreaked by Cyclone Nargis was an expression of God's anger at the junta's failed rule, discontent with the military leadership is apparently beginning to mount."

¶3. "Gloomy Choice" The liberal Asahi wrote (5/11): "It appears certain that Burma will be ruled under a constitution for the first time in 20 years in view of the tight control of the junta, which urged voters to support the draft. For many Burmese, Saturday turned out to be a gloomy day, as they were pressed to choose between continued oppression and a constitution that gives the military permanent legitimacy."

¶4. "People's Will Repressed" Bangkok-based correspondents for the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri reported (5/11): "The national referendum on Saturday provided the Burmese people with an opportunity to take part in national politics for the first time in 18 years. However, most voters appeared to have been coerced by the junta, and there was no sense of elation associated with casting ballots. Anger at the junta, which is continuing its oppression and is

failing to assist victims of the cyclone, is permeating deeply into Burmese society."

¶5. "Difficult Trip to Middle East" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri's Washington correspondent predicted (5/12): "In his upcoming trip to Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, President Bush is tasked with jumpstarting the stalled Middle East peace talks, given that his goal of sealing an accord within this year is becoming difficult to attain. Just as the rising tensions in Lebanon call into question the efficacy of his diplomatic policy of democratization in the Middle East, the President's six-day tour of the region may turn out to be a trying one that ends up mirroring the stalemate in his Middle East policy."

DONOVAN